

## How we approach complaints about the work of the General Social Care Council (GSCC)

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## **The GSCC - who we are and what we do**

The General Social Care Council (GSCC) protects the public by promoting high standards of professional education, conduct and practice amongst social workers.

As the workforce regulator we maintain a register of those who meet our requirements, and it is a criminal offence to practise social work or claim to be a social worker in England, without being registered with the GSCC.

We welcome comments and complaints as they help us to learn and grow, and to improve the customer service we provide.

## **Complaints – what is covered by this document**

This document sets out how you can complain and what you can expect from us.

We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with the service we have provided.

While we always aim to provide high standards of service we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. When this happens we will admit our mistakes, put things right, and learn from what happened so we improve our services.

## **What is not covered by this document**

This document does not cover issues to do with:

- The conduct of a social worker. This is covered by a separate process, the details of which can be found via our website at [Complaints Procedure](#) or by contacting our Conduct Team either on 01788 532405 or by emailing [CIAS@gsc.org.uk](mailto:CIAS@gsc.org.uk)
- A decision to refuse registration, where the right of appeal to the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal is available. They can be contacted via their website at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/courts-and-tribunals/tribunals/care-standards/index.htm> or by telephoning 01325 392712 or emailing [cst@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cst@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk)

- Decisions made by, or on behalf of, our Registration or Conduct Committees, where the right of appeal to the aforementioned Health, Education and Social Care Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal is available.
- Concerns about a university. It is better if you first raise your concern with the university and allow them the opportunity to deal with it. If after doing this you remain unhappy, then you might want to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator via their website at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/> or their telephone helpline on 0118 959 9813.
- General observations and comments, for example about something we have said in the press or the relevance of our policies. If we classify your comments in this manner we will tell you this. In certain cases we will provide clarification, for example, on why we have acted or said what we have.

If a concern is raised about an ongoing conduct or registration matter, then while we will acknowledge your concern we may well decide not to respond to it in full if we feel it would be better for those processes to be brought to a conclusion first.

There may be other concerns not listed here that we are unable to look into. If this happens, we will let you know why this is and will try and point you in the direction of someone who may be able to help you.

## **Good Complaint Handling**

In developing this approach we have adopted the Principles of Good Complaints Handling as identified by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. These are focussed upon:

- Getting it right – having an approach and systems in place that encourage staff to resolve complaints in a constructive manner, when they occur.
- Our customers – making sure this document is simple and accessible, and that we deal with any complaints promptly and sensitively.
- Being open and accountable – providing clear and complete information on how to complain and how to take complaints further. Giving honest explanations and wherever practical, reasons for decisions.
- Acting fairly and proportionately – treating all customers fairly and without discrimination. Making sure that complaints are investigated in an appropriate manner.

- Putting things right – acknowledging our mistakes and apologising where appropriate. Taking action to reduce the likelihood of them happening again.
- Seeking to improve – using complaints to understand what we can do better and as a means to improve our services.

## **How to Complain**

In the first instance, you should try to resolve your complaint with the person you have been dealing with. You do not have to use the complaints form, but it might help you to explain your complaint and what you would like us to do about it. It will also help us to understand how we can help you.

If you are unhappy with that person's response then you can either contact them again and try and resolve the issue with them direct, or you can contact our Customer Services Transformation Manager and formalise your complaint.

Their contact details are:

Customer Services Transformation Manager  
 General Social Care Council  
 Myson House  
 Railway Terrace  
 Rugby CV21 3HT  
 Tel: 0845 070 0630  
 Email: [customercomplaints@gsc.org.uk](mailto:customercomplaints@gsc.org.uk)  
 Fax: 01788 532476

Please tell them:

- The names of the people you have been dealing with.
- Any reference numbers we have given you.
- Your Registration number, if you are a social worker.
- What you feel has gone wrong.
- Why you are unhappy with the handling of your complaint.
- What you feel we should do to put things right.

## **What we will do**

Our staff are encouraged to deal with any complaints in a constructive manner, when they occur. However, if having raised your complaint you remain unhappy and have chosen to formalise your complaint by contacting our Customer Services Transformation Manager, they will then:

- Acknowledge your complaint within five working days of receipt.

- Decide whether to ask the relevant team to try again to resolve your complaint, or to respond to you directly themselves.

Examples of where a response from the Customer Services Transformation Manager would be the most appropriate form of action include:

- If your complaint is about the work of more than one team or has the potential to impact more widely than within the team where it arose
- Where the issues you raise are complex and it is likely to take the team you have been dealing with more than 15 working days to respond.

If the Customer Services Transformation Manager decides to refer your complaint back to the relevant team, they will maintain contact with that team and review their reply before it is sent to you.

Whoever replies to your complaint, they will aim to do so within 15 working days, but will let you know if it will take longer. It should only take us longer than 15 days on very rare occasions. For example, because the people we need to speak with are unavailable or the complaint is particularly complicated and we need more time to consider it.

If your complaint is about the work of the Customer Services Team then in the interests of impartiality we will ask another manager with experience of investigating complaints to look at the issues you have raised. Indeed, with any complaint we receive, regardless which team or member of staff it concerns, the Head of Performance and Customer Services has the discretion to ask an external party with experience of independently investigating complaints to become involved, either by investigating the complaint themselves or by reviewing our approach to handling the complaint.

### **If you still disagree**

If you still remain unhappy after receiving a response to your formal complaint, then you may wish to get back in touch with our Customer Services Transformation Manager. If so, they will:

- acknowledge your correspondence
- bring it to the attention of the Head of Performance & Customer Services.

The Head of Performance & Customer Services will then decide if another response is needed. This might be from the Head of Performance & Customer Services themselves or another member of the senior management team.

It might be the case however; that the Head of Performance & Customer Services decides no further action is needed. Indeed, unless they feel your response raises significant new issues or there is more to add to our previous

replies, then while we will acknowledge your concerns we may not respond further, and this will be the end of our complaints procedure.

## **The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman**

Any decisions we make about a complaint can be referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. Their contacts details are:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman  
Millbank Tower  
Millbank  
London SW1P 4QP  
Website: <http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/>  
Telephone: 0345 015 4033  
Email: [phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk)

## **Your responsibility**

We expect our staff to be treated politely and with respect. We do not expect them to tolerate abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour. If this happens we will:

- Tell you when behaviour is unacceptable and ask it to be changed.
- Consider limiting contact. For example, by restricting telephone calls to specified times or insisting they only be contacted by letter or email.
- Consider ending contact, and in extreme cases, reporting matters to the police.

In exceptional circumstances we may choose not to investigate a complaint if we feel it is deliberately repetitive, burdensome, or frivolous in nature, and to investigate it would incur a disproportionate amount of public expense.

## **If you need help**

You can complain in writing, by e-mail, by fax or over the telephone.

We are happy to receive complaints through an advocate or representative acting on your behalf. We will ask you to confirm that you are happy for that person to act for you. We will deal with them directly until the investigation into your complaint is completed, though you can tell us at any stage if you no longer want the person to act for you. Information about our complaints procedure can be made available in a range of formats. Please contact our Customer Services Transformation Manager if you need information in an alternative language or format.

## General Social Care Council Complaints Process

